

he would not get confirmed. But the better part of me and, of course, common sense dictates that the country needs him. For me, to lose him from my staff is really very difficult. He was such an important part of what we have been able to accomplish here in the Senate. He is a really a fine lawyer with a great legal mind. I have worked closely with him for years.

He is going to lead the Justice Department regarding legislative affairs. He has had prosecutorial experience and Government experience. I know and respect all he has done to strengthen our national security, forward the cause of justice, and raise the ethics standards of our Government and in the whole country. In fact, Ron took a lead role in the last Congress, as we passed the most sweeping ethics and lobbying reforms in the history of our Congress and our country.

Those who know and work with Ron value not only his extensive experience but just the person he is. I express my appreciation to Ron Weich for his sound judgment, his collegiality, his honesty, and loyalty to me. Eric Holder will find the same there.

While many of his colleagues from Columbia University and Yale Law School, where he was educated, are out in the private sector making a lot of money, Ron has spent most of his life in public service. He came back to the Senate after having been in a renowned law firm downtown. But he came back because this is what he wants to do. He is able to make enough money to raise his family. He is not interested in how much money he makes. He is interested in what good he can do for our country.

Our Nation benefits immensely when people as good at what they do as Ron is—and as good to others as Ron is—choose to make a difference.

As I have indicated, I am sad to see him leave this Capitol complex. I am comforted by knowing that Ron will play an important role in rebuilding Attorney General Holder's Justice Department to a place where all are once again equal under the law, protected by the law, and no one is above the law.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

THANKING THE MAJORITY LEADER

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader for his kind words. He is a friend of long standing. We came to Washington together in the House of Representatives many years ago, and we certainly never could have dreamed, when we arrived here so many years ago, that today we would be able to work so closely and so well in the leadership of the Senate.

HARRY REID is a terrific leader. He has done an extraordinary job. Today a lot of praise is being given to the President for his first 100 days. I want to add in that chorus of praise HARRY REID, the Senator from Nevada, who has

helped the President achieve the goals that he set out to achieve in the first 100 days. He has made an extraordinary commitment to make that happen, not just in time and effort but in patience dealing with Members of the U.S. Senate.

I thank Senator REID for his earlier comments.

CONFIRMATION OF JOSEPH SZABO

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate Mr. Joseph Szabo on his confirmation as the next Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration.

Joe Szabo has made a significant contribution to my State of Illinois, and I believe he is going to bring great success to the Department of Transportation. Joe Szabo understands better than most the long days, unpredictable schedules, and sometimes hazardous working conditions that come with employment in the railroad industry.

He has worked for the railroad—both the Illinois Central and Metra—since he was 18 years old, including stints as yard switchman, road trainman, and commuter passenger conductor.

Five generations of his family worked on the railroad. Joe learned firsthand about the railroads from his father, a 40-year switchman for the Illinois Central Railroad. His father instilled in him a passion for rail work that has helped Joe become a trusted and respected voice in rail labor and in the industry.

Joe has a distinguished record of public service and many accomplishments to show for his work in Illinois. As elected mayor of Riverdale, IL, and State legislative director for the United Transportation Union, UTU, Joe has developed a reputation as a passionate and effective advocate for freight and passenger rail and its workers.

During his tenure as UTU State director, Joe's work was integral to the State of Illinois doubling its investment in passenger rail. This additional State investment Joe worked so hard to achieve allowed Illinois to double the frequency of Amtrak trains leaving Chicago for Quincy, Carbondale, and St. Louis, and to lay the groundwork for expanding service to Rockford and the Quad Cities—our next achievements, I hope soon.

Joe's advocacy helped Illinois passenger rail achieve the fastest growth in ridership and revenue in the entire national Amtrak system.

Joe will now bring his passion for the railroad industry and his experience with rail labor to Washington. As all of us know, President Obama, Vice President BIDEN, and this Congress have made the single largest investment in passenger rail in America's history.

The \$8 billion we included in the stimulus for high-speed passenger rail represents a commitment to taking the next step in intercity passenger rail for the 21st century.

Implementing this vision will be monumental. It will take a good-faith working relationship between Congress, the White House, the industry, and State and local governments.

Thankfully, Joe Szabo has earned the confidence and full support of President Obama. Joe and the President worked closely together when then-State Senator Obama served in Springfield in the Illinois General Assembly.

Mr. President, I am here today to tell you what President Obama and I already know: When it comes to making high-speed rail a reality in the U.S. and ensuring that millions of Americans have access to safe, reliable passenger and freight rail, there is no one better for this job than Joe Szabo.

Mr. President, in the months and years ahead, I can assure you this country will find Joe Szabo understands the critical role our national rail system plays to the health of our economy, our environment, and our future.

I am proud to have added my voice to the chorus of so many who asked the administration to nominate Joe and give him this chance to serve our Nation. I know he is going to do an exceptional job.

COMMENDING THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA GYMNASTICS TEAM

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 119, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 119) commending the University of Georgia gymnastics team for winning the 2009 NCAA national championship.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 119) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 119

Whereas in 2009, the University of Georgia gymnastics team, the "Gym Dogs", won its 10th National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) women's gymnastics championship;

Whereas the University of Georgia gymnastics program has won 16 Southeastern Conference (SEC) championships;

Whereas the University of Georgia gymnastics program has produced 7 Honda Award winners, with Courtney Kupets under consideration as a finalist for the 2009 award;

Whereas the 2009 national title is the Gym Dogs' 5th consecutive national championship;

Whereas the University of Georgia gymnastics team is the most successful gymnastics program in the Nation;